



August 25, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
312 N. Spring St. Suite 1748
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Senator Boxer:

The leadership for the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California School Boards Association (CSBA), California School Business Officials (CASBO) and the Coalition of Adequate School Housing (CASH) have come together to submit this letter to request your assistance in working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in providing standardized guidance to school officials with regard to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

In October, a group of parents at Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District raised concerns about the presence of PCBs at Malibu High School. This group later expanded to include a number of activist celebrity parents, such as Cindy Crawford and Josh Malina, who are deeply committed to promoting healthy classrooms. SMMUSD Superintendent Sandra Lyon engaged the community, listened to concerns and then worked with the SMMUSD Board of Education to develop a plan to address the concerns. The District committed from the outset that they would rely on experts to guide the environmental action plan. They turned to the EPA and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), where Superintendent Lyon then directed the District's newly hired environmental engineering firm to coordinate the development and implementation of a testing, best management practices and remediation (if necessary) program. Ultimately, based on EPA oversight, results from the testing plan have indicated Malibu schools are safe and the District was able to move forward with a successful first day of school on August 19.

Given the widespread use of PCBs in school construction from 1950-1979, the potential for a variety of PCB-related concerns at the state and federal levels are great. We believe the efforts in Malibu were handled well. However, the District should not have had to search to create a program that would inform and guide their process for ensuring their schools were healthy.

SMMUSD's efforts should be used to inform us all, and we should collaborate to develop a standardized program to assist school districts throughout the state and nation when faced with similar issues.

As educators, none of us pretend to be experts in health standards. We have consistently guided California school districts to rely on those who work within various state and national oversight agencies to provide education and guidance surrounding these efforts. In general, it is good local policy for education professionals to rely on oversight agencies with jurisdiction to set health standards and testing protocols, just as SMMUSD did. To that point, we applaud EPA Region IX for their clear communication and strong leadership in working closely with SMMUSD to provide expertise and oversight.

As Ms. Crawford has noted, this really has become a federal issue and there will be parents and community members who are likely to follow her lead and raise issues related to PCBs across the country.

We have seen similar issues surface in the past – from asbestos in the 1990s to formaldehyde in portable classroom carpeting in the 2000s. I think we all agree that health policy and protocols should not be set on a site-by-site or district-by-district basis. As such, the education community is committed to working together to develop a standardized program for school-specific guidance on best practices for testing, notification, management and prevention. Just as health experts should not be setting education standards, it should not fall to school officials to set health or environmental policy or standards.

Senator Boxer, you have been a strong advocate for schools educators and students. You have also been a champion for the environment. This is an opportunity to wear both hats and ensure that while our children are engaged in the rigorous academic programs implemented by our hardworking administrators, teachers and staff in our California schools, that they can do so with no concerns about the safety of their instructional environment.

We ask that you engage EPA and request their involvement in our collective efforts to develop a standardized approach to addressing school concerns. EPA has already indicated an interest in working with our collaborative; but given your specific passion for these issues, we want to ensure the request comes directly from your office to emphasize the importance of the issue.

Thank you for continuing to put schools first and for addressing this important issue. There is no question that we all appreciate your ongoing efforts to protect California's 6.2 million students and the hundreds of thousands of educators, who all deserve to attend school in a healthy classroom.

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Re: PCB's at Malibu High School
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Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Wesley Smith, Ph.D., Executive Director
ACSA

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a cursive style with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Molly McGee Hewitt, Executive Director
CASBO

A handwritten signature in black ink, with a large, stylized 'D' at the beginning and a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Dennis Meyers, Assistant Executive Director
Governmental Relations
CSBA

A handwritten signature in black ink, with a cursive style and a long, horizontal line at the end.

Ian Padilla, Legislative Advocate
CASH

cc: Sandra Lyon, Superintendent, SMMUSD
Jared Blumenfeld, Regional Administrator, USEPA Region 9
Tom Huetteman, Associate Director, USEPA Region 9
Miriam Ingenito, Acting Director, DTSC
Senator Ted Lieu
Assembly Member Richard Bloom
Brooks Allen, Deputy Counsel, State Board of Education